

## Death Of The Internet: The Duplicate Content Glut

An often repeated mantra of the Internet is that "Content is king." Whether your goal is to lure the search spiders, achieve an enviable page rank for your site, or simply to attract visitors to purchase your offerings or click on your AdSense listings, the key is to offer valuable information. Web surfers are hungry for help with their problems, seek to find a new perspective on their lives, or simply crave the enjoyment of reading about their area of passionate interest.

The thousands of websites developed within the past ten years, consisting primarily of links to other sites and very little copy, have fallen by the wayside. The FFA sites are generally disregarded, their thousands of daily postings relegated to spam filters and junk mail folders. The traffic exchanges, under pressure, are moving away from cash payments for referrals to what they always were: free but untargeted traffic generators. The payment processors are cracking down on systems that are little more than electronic pyramid schemes and dropping MLM programs like hot potatoes.

So what will be left? The corporate, government, and news agency sites continue to provide information and services. Online gambling proliferates internationally as does all kinds of entertainment: games, music, videos, television show insider information. Blogs, ranging from outstanding to appalling, have mushroomed into the millions and hobbyists, collectors, sports fans and various enthusiasts maintain websites catering to their niche audiences.

And then there are the "new" content sites - millions of web pages with recycled content from software generators existing only to spew out "content" that can be claimed as a Web Master's own creation.

Ever watchful, the search engines detected the duplicate content choking their spiders and started to ban such listings. Ever alert, the software designers figure out how to tweak each article so that it was not 100% identical with the thousands of copies of the same article residing on other web pages.

What have we created? Billions of pages that contain no significant information, no new perspective, no original thought, no innovative ideas, and offer absolutely no redeeming social value. A majority of the free (and even the expensive) repetitive content material is poorly written, more concerned with keyword stuffing than making any kind of salient point. The sole purpose of the content is to make money through ad clicks or affiliate links.

Those who know how to write, and want to share their ideas in this fantastically rich environment, are lost in the mulch piles of the wanna-be marketing gurus. Where once a search for particular information turned up a page or two of relevant, worthwhile resources, it may now take a determined surfer hours to find the needed information, ploughing through endless pages of nonsensical articles related only to the search through manipulative keywords strewn throughout otherwise irrelevant material.

The Internet is a boon for all of us. No longer do we have to pore through encyclopedias or run down to the library to seek out wanted information. A five second search can give us that name on the tip of our tongue or the date of some event that has been eluding us. We can shop online, review menus before we commit to going out, find forms for every purpose, and obtain legal and health information that saves us the money and time required to consult a professional. We can get our questions answered, our problems addressed, and our loneliness assuaged in forums, chat rooms, and message boards.

None of us want to see the Net regulated. It still has a frontier spirit about it: no fences, no rules, no red tape, no social hierarchy. We can become whatever we want in its virtual anonymity. We can grow and learn and develop ourselves in ways that never existed before the advent of the personal computer. We can reach across the world as quickly as across the room, touching lives and interacting with others as never before possible.

All that being said, doesn't such freedom also carry basic responsibilities? To embrace the positives and avoid a threatened overdoes of uselessness, we need to be what the Existentialists call "authentic." We can be whoever and whatever we please, as long as we are ourselves. Such a powerful force for the growth of humanity demands that we approach it honestly and respectfully.

On an even playing field, unencumbered with cultural, social, or religious restrictions, we can communicate with each other at an hitherto impossible individual and intimate level. To continue to develop these incredibly exciting opportunities, we need to be wary of the scam sharks that circle our every click.

Scams are not just the phishing sites, the strident letters from African widows, or the non-existent lottery winnings, they are also the shysters and cheaters who pass off the creations of others as their own and go into a feeding frenzy whenever a new piece of software appears that promises, for a substantial fee, to develop thousands of pages overnight that will generate income without effort and create experts out of neophytes.

The search engine monitors are very good at their job. We can only hope that they can stay one step ahead of the glut now gushing forth. If not, we may eventually crush the electronic goose, and its golden eggs will become only a fading memory of what might have been.

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#### About the Author

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